

**King County Agriculture Commission
Minutes from February 9, 2006
Mercerview Community Center
Mercer Island WA**

Commissioners Present: Nancy Hutto, Bob Tidball, Ben Kodama, Grant Davidson, George Irwin, Ewing Stringfellow, Dick Gradwohl, Michael Blakely, Roger Calhoon

Staff: Steve Evans, Judy Herring, Claire Dyckman, Nathan Brown, Kathy Creahan, King County (KC) Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD) Agriculture Programs; Bill Eckel, Manager, Office of Rural and Resource Programs, WLRD.

Guest Agency Staff: Josh Monahan, King Conservation District (KCD); Todd Murray, Washington State University Extension (WSU) KC.

Guests: Marilyn Cope, Staff, King County Council; Jeff McMorris, Staff, Councilmember Kathy Lambert; Jeanette McKague, citizen; Maxine Keesling, citizen; Judy Taylor, Sheep Farmer, Middle Green; Anne Mack, P.L.A.N.; Don Stewart, American Farmland Trust.

Nancy Hutto called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes: The Commission approved the minutes of the January meetings.

Commission Roundabout:

Roger Calhoon: 240 people attended the successful Farmer Chef's Connection workshop. Dick Grawahl sold 35 animals across the country. He is quitting the Commission, addressing health issues, and is thankful for serving on the Commission! Grant Davidson: trying to get 4 markets up and running. Ewing Stringfellow: cleaning up 26 acres of wind damage, and addressing elk problems. Michael Blakely: noted that chefs at the workshop wanted to figure out how to set up an order system that would be sustainable for the farmers, recognizing that a rancher can't just sell the tenderloin of an animal. Nancy Hutto: finances will be affected by mites that are reducing the bee population. George Irwin: there are a lot of bills to follow in Olympia - tax bills, anaerobic digesters. The Farm Bureau introduced the property rights initiative. Wade Bennet got his permit and is producing hard cider.

Commission Business:

Decisions Made:

Motion: Michael Blakely moved, and Grant Davidson seconded that the Commission write a letter to the City of Seattle supporting the acquisition of the property for the University Farmer's Market. Motion passed. Bob Tidball moved and added, and Grant seconded, that the letter should mention that we are interested in making markets permanent, just as we protect agricultural lands and other agricultural facilities. Discussion ensued. It was pointed out that permanence does not necessarily entail purchase of property. Motion passed.

Michael Blakely will be the Commissioner to follow up with Chris Curtiss on this issue.

Motion: George Irwin moved, and Bob Tidball seconded that the Commission rescind its January decision to send a second letter of support for the Middle Fork Ranches negotiations with the King County Department of Transportation on a swap for land. The County proposal for that land has changed considerably, reducing the amount of land that might be affected. Motion passed.

Motion: George Irwin moved, and Ewing Stringfellow seconded, that the Commission accept the list of 2006 work priorities identified by the Commission and refined by the January meeting of the subcommittees. Motion passed.

Recommendations:

The Commission informally agreed that:

- When a project or property is formally brought to the attention of the Commission, one commissioner would volunteer to follow up on the issues related to that project, including a site visit, when possible.
- Staff would draft a letter to the Executive and Council, beginning to implement its 2006 priorities, including that of establishing a better relationship with Council.
- Farmers be encouraged to bring their concerns before the Commission, yet not turn the commission into a mini hearing. The work item noted as "mediation" or "arbitration" was clarified as simply the desire that someone with clout help agricultural landowners when dealing with difficult County systems.
- There should be an attempt to fill a significant number of the vacancies on the Commission.
- John Roney of Snohomish County should be invited to the next meeting to discuss what Snohomish County is doing to help farmers.
- There would be an update on the status of the rural ombudsperson position.

Presentations:

Leonard Bauer, Manager of the Growth Management, Department of Community Trade and Economic Development (CTED)

Kathy Creahan, Supervisor of the Agricultural Team, King County Agriculture Program

Chris Curtiss, Director of Neighborhood Farmers Alliance, Patty Whistler, Chair of University Heights Community Club, requested a letter of support for the University District Farmer's Market.

Don Stewart, American Farmland Trust,

Public Comment:

Public Comments were made by Maxine Keesling concerning the Farm Bill, the Transfer of Development Rights, and noted her opposition to the Governor's bills on agriculture that were addressed in the presentation.

Calendar:

Monday, February 27th: Candidates for the commission will be interviewed on Monday, by Bob Tidball, George Irwin, Jeff Mc Morris, and Steve Evans.

Tuesday Feb 28th or Mar 2: The Regulatory Committee will discuss the Flood Hazard Reduction Plan, and possible revisions of the Deeds and Covenants for the Farmland Preservation Program.

THIS IS AN EXPERIMENT, DICTATED BY TIME, BUT ALSO SUGGESTED BY SOME PARTICIPANTS:

IF Commissioners have an ongoing document in front of them on the status of each of the items the commission is working on; and

IF there is a Commission web-site (there will be) that

Links to Coop Extension and King Conservation District websites

Describes ongoing County Agriculture Programs

Keeps a calendar of upcoming events; and

IF we keep electronic recordings of each meeting so we can research issues if they arise; and

IF we keep and post the notes of the Regulatory and Program Committees... ..

Do we need to keep documenting the agency reports, discussions, items as new business and old? May we instead keep the minutes as a document of

Decisions made

Recommendations or informal agreements

A description of controversies when needed?

PLEASE COMMENT!